



## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**  
Saturday, February 9, 2002

Contact:  
Stephen P. McDonald  
Public Information Office  
(801) 538-7099  
801-557-0950 (cell)

### **Waiver Approval Expands Insurance Coverage to 25,000 Utah Adults**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today approved a Utah Medicaid demonstration waiver to expand benefits for primary care and preventive services to about 25,000 Utah residents who otherwise would not have access to health coverage.

In connection with the waiver, Governor Michael O. Leavitt signed into law House Bill 122 enabling even more uninsured working Utahns to obtain health coverage similar to the new Medicaid waiver through a partnership with employers and the private insurance market.

The waiver allows Utah's Medicaid program to provide a limited medical package to working adults whose income is less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The federal poverty level is \$1,074 per month for one working adult or \$6.19 an hour.

The new program also targets low-wage earners in small employer settings where their companies are not able to pay full medical coverage. By targeting this group health officials hope to reduce the number of uninsured working adults aged 18-64 by about 25,000 or 16 percent.

“Our goal is to give states like Utah the flexibility that they need to strengthen their Medicaid programs and extend health coverage to more American families,” Secretary Thompson said. “Through waiver demonstrations and plan amendment like this one, states are expanding eligibility and improving access to quality care for residents who otherwise would not have health insurance.”

- MORE -

## **Page 2 of 2 — Waiver Approval Expands Insurance Coverage to 25,000 Utah Adults**

Governor Leavitt made reference to the Utah waiver in his State of the State address last month when he said, “Over the next 1,000 days, I propose we add 25,000 more to the rolls of the insured. This can be done with no additional state cost by changing our strategy to provide basic health care to many rather than unlimited care to a few. I have requested federal waivers to implement this piece of common sense. It’s the kind of common sense that may bring health care to tens of thousands of Utahns who need it and currently do not have it.”

Under the new plan adults will receive physician, pharmacy, lab and x-ray, emergency services, health education, transportation required for patient care and preventive dental services. In-patient hospital and specialty care are not covered, however, some in-patient services will be donated by Utah hospitals.

“We are very excited about the opportunity to partner with the private sector to bring this limited medical benefit to low-wage employees who otherwise would not have access to health coverage,” says Rod Betit, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Health. “This would not have been possible without the support of Secretary Thompson and Governor Leavitt who were willing to depart from traditional broad-base coverage for a few to a more limited plan for many.”

- END -